

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

A BOOK ABOUT PEPPYS.

SAMUEL PEPPYS AND THE WORLD HE LIVED IN.
By HENRY B. WHEATLEY, F. S. A.—New York:
Selchow & Waloff.

Hundreds of people have heard of Samuel Pepys to one who has read through his celebrated Diary. His charming naïvete, his amiable domestic character, his constant intercourse with the great people of his time, his propensity to record everything, have made his volumes rescued by the ingenuity of cryptographers from the cipher in which he concealed his story, among the most interesting and important of modern reprints. Mr. Wheatley, in this compilation, has endeavored to draw together some of the most interesting incidents of the Diary relating to Pepys's life, and to the manners of his time, and also to illustrate them from other sources. There is, to begin with, a chapter upon "Pepys Before the Diary." We have some account of him during his residence at Magdalene College, the college books having been searched to find some trace of him. Under date of October 21, 1653, it is recorded that Pepys and Hind were solemnly admonished for having been scandalously over-served with drink the night before. Yet he is thought to have brought away from the University a good stock of classical learning. He there made the acquaintance of the celebrated Selden, from whom he borrowed the collection of ballads which proved the basis of the famous Pepysian collection. It was like him to marry, in 1655, Elizabeth St. Michael, a beautiful and portentous girl of fifteen—the famous Mrs. Pepys of the Diary. When Pepys took this step he was still poor and without settled means of support. He lived as he could until after the Restoration. He went over with the fleet which brought back Charles II. After that he gets a place in the Navy Office, and another as Clerk of the Privy Seal. Readers of the Diary will be interested in the following summary of Pepys's foibles:

Pepys acknowledged to two weaknesses of which he tried to cure himself by means of vows—first, however, with a very successful result. The first weakness was a too great and frequent attendance at the theatre. On July 2, 1660, we find him making this confession: "Having the beginning of this week made a vow to myself to drink no wine this week—finding it unfit to look after business—and this day breaking it against my will, I am much troubled for it; but I hope it will forgive me!" On Michaelmas Day, 1661, he had a similar fit of weakness, and again made a vow so that he would not go to the theatre for fear of being perceived by his servants in what case I was." Next year, on the same day, he finds that "his ears for drinking of wine and going to plays are out" and so he resolves to take some liberty, "and then fall to them again." On December 30, 1662, we find him writing: "After dinner drinking here or a glass of wine which liberty I now take till I begin to eat again."

On October 23, 1663, he drinks some hock-pepper, which consists of wine mixed with sugar and spices under the belief that he is not breaking his vow, because "this is only a mixed compound drink and not any wine." On January 1, 1664, in this piece of confidante, to that of Fielding's Newgate chamberlain, who preferred punch to wine because the former was a liquor nowhere spoken against in Scripture:

"There is a great deal in the Diary of Mr. Pepys's clothes; and here is one of the first notices which we have in the present volume of this passion:

The mixture of extravagance and frugality that is constantly exhibited in the "Diary" is most amusing, particularly in the case of clothes. Thus, when he hears that the Queen is ill, he stops the making of his velvet cloak and he says whether she lives or dies he will make another; and when he goes to see her again, that he spent £200 on his own clothes, although as a set-off against this large sum, Mrs. Pepys's clothes only cost £12. This love of fine clothes is continually peeping out, and it has been suggested that he inherited it with the tailor blood of his father. A better reason, however, may be found in the fact that, once a man is very poor, and forced to dress like a beggar for want of clothes; so that, now he is in funds, he tries to make up for his former deficiency, and resolves to dress himself handsomely.

A few years after this he expresses himself as ashamed of the shabbiness of his clothes, when he wished to speak to the King, but did not like to do so, because his linen was dirty and his clothes mean.

During the great fire in London in 1666, Pepys showed his common sense strongly. He was the first to seek Whitehall to tell the King and the Duke of York of the impending danger, and his Majesty instructed him to go to the Lord Mayor and command him to pull down houses in every direction! At this time Pepys had saved a large sum of money, and he seems to have been much troubled to know how to take care of it. Gentlemen who relies in modern methods of safety will appreciate the situation of the Diarist.

In those days of bands and other means for the deposit of money, it is not easy to realize the difficulties of men who possessed money in the seventeenth century. Pepys sent some down to Brampton to be buried, but his wife and father did the business entrusted to them so badly that he was quite wild and uneasy with fears that it might be lost by others. He gave down himself to a life of idleness and the description of the hunt after it is certainly one of the most entertaining passages in the "Diary." He and his father and wife got out into the garden with a dark lantern and groped about a long time, getting lost on the way. Then they found that the bags were rotten, and gold and notes were all spread about and covered with dirt, the latter being scarcely distinguishable. Then there is a gathering of it up to be washed, and in the end not much is lost, although throughout the proceedings Pepys is in dread that the neighbors will see and hear what is going on.

Mr. Wheatley thus epitomizes with judicial accuracy the character of Pepys:

Pepys's nature was singularly contradictory, and in summing up the chief points of his character, we can do little more than make a catalogue of his various qualities, giving the bad ones first, and then enumerating the good ones. A set-off, however, to his faults, and could try to amend them. He was vain, ignorant, credulous, and superstitious; yet he had scholarly tastes, and his orderly and business habits were so marked that they would point to him as a man out of the common run. He was bold yet he was also generous. This seems a harsh verdict, but it can easily be proved to be true, and we will proceed to notice the several points *sériant*.

He was a coward, for on one occasion he was so angry with the cookmaid that he kicked her. He was not sorry for this, but he was vexed that Sir William Penn's footboy saw him, and would probably tell the world.

His vanity may be taken for granted, as every line of the "Diary" shows it. He was ignorant of history, for he expected to find an account of England's dominion on the sea in "Domesday Book." As to his credulity, he appears to have believed everything that was told him, however absurd. His superstition is shown in his belief in charms and amulets, and in particular in the belief that he had scholarly tastes, and his orderly and business habits were so marked that they would point to him as a man out of the common run. He was bold yet he was also generous.

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